

Dark and Thrilling, Strange and Sweet by AlysanneBlackwood

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Summary:

"Friday evening, Omar Sharif

In black and white and blurry through tears.

My mother and I would sit there in a trance

He was cool to the marrow, the pharaoh of romance."

Steve and Dustin watch Lawrence of Arabia.

Dark and Thrilling, Strange and Sweet

Author's Note:

Inspired by the song "Omar Sharif" from the musical "The Band's Visit." All I can say is that you should listen to the song, and the whole musical. It's a beautiful show.

A Friday evening, 1985

"Watching a movie?" Steve asks, flopping down on the Hendersons' couch the minute Claudia shuts the door. Dustin nods, rolling his eyes.

"Yeah. What else did you think the popcorn was for?"

"The war against the Martians," Steve deadpans. "Popcorn is their only weakness." Dustin snorts with laughter and grabs a box off of the TV table, holding it up to Steve.

"Ever seen *Lawrence of Arabia*?"

"No. Isn't that some history thing?"

"Yeah, but Lucas says it's tubular. I mean, it's no *Halloween*, but it should be good."

"Say 'tubular' again and I won't hesitate to ground you. And *Halloween* isn't scary. Or even remotely good."

"Take that back, Harrington, it's a classic."

"No."

"What movies *do* you even like?"

"*Lord of the Flies*."

"What's that?"

"It's about these kids who get stuck on an island and go crazy... never mind, you'll read it in high school."

"You said it's a movie," Dustin pointed out.

"It was a book first. Now shut up. It's starting."

Dustin shuts up and they watch Lawrence die in a motorcycle accident, and then the flashback to him as a young lieutenant, sent with a guide into the desert to meet with a prince. Dustin squints at the screen when the guide opens a well to drink from it.

"Is that a person?" he asks, pointing to a speck at the back of the screen.

"Quiet," Steve hisses, more invested in the story than he'd like to admit.

The speck on-screen moves closer, and it is a person, who shoots the guide and climbs off his camel to inspect the corpse. "*He is dead*," he says.

"Yes," Lawrence replies. "*Why?*"

The man unwraps the cloth from his face, approaching the camera. And Steve's heart stops for a second. Dustin must feel him stiffen, because he taps his arm.

"You okay?"

"What? Yeah. Just remembered that I forgot to do something. I'll do it later." He can practically sense Dustin's eyes narrowing, but he simply cannot look away from the screen. Not as long as the man is there. Ali, he said his name was. Steve has no idea who plays the guy, but whoever he is, he's goddamn magnetic. And cool. Even in that desert, he's cool, collected and assured and Steve half wants to be him, half wants to be with him. Romantic, not romantic, doesn't matter. Being in the same space would be enough.

The movie goes on, full of meetings and battles and travelling, and it's good enough to stay interested. But every time Ali comes onscreen, Steve is pretty sure he skips a breath. When he manages to

look away for half a second, he sees that Dustin is staring at Ali with the same amazement, completely spellbound, and for once, completely still. Steve almost laughs. Most of the time Dustin hardly keeps himself from jumping up and pacing in front of the screen, and now he sits curled into the crook of Steve's elbow as if in a trance. Perhaps he is in a trance. Steve's not entirely sure he isn't in one himself. He's beginning to imagine the sand on screen spilling outwards and covering the carpet. Any other time he would snicker at himself, shaking off the notion as the kids getting to him. But it doesn't sound so crazy now, the idea of the living room becoming the desert, the wind blowing hot and dry in their faces, Ali coming to them on the wind--

And the movie is over before they know it, and they sit there for about five minutes before Dustin pulls himself out of Steve's elbow.

"So," he croaks, his voice hoarse, "Lucas was right. That was good."

"Yeah," Steve says, only vaguely aware of a cramp in his shoulder. They don't say much else for the rest of the night. They both can sense that the other can't stop thinking about Ali, and when Steve is about to leave after Claudia comes home from her book club, he catches sight of a name on the box.

WITH OMAR SHARIF AS "ALI".

Omar Sharif. He doesn't say the name aloud, but it repeats in his head the entire drive home. Omar Sharif. When you can see for miles every day and things never change, you can't forget something different.

Author's Note:

Omar Sharif's character in Lawrence of Arabia is actually named Sherif Ali. Constructive criticism is very much appreciated.